Leon EMIN

MUSLIMS in the USSR

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Translated from the Russian by Boris LUNKOV

Леон Эмин
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In the Name of Man

Muslims in the USSR live primarily in six of the fifteen Union Republics: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia and Azerbaijan. They also live in several Autonomous Republics of the Russian Federation (RSFSR): Kabardin-Balkar, Daghestan, Chechen-Ingush, Tatar and Bashkir, and in some regions of the Russian Federation.

Islam is the most widespread religion in the USSR after Christianity. Although most Soviet Muslims are Sunnites, there are also Shiite Muslims who live in the Caucasus and Ismailite Muslims who live in the Pamirs.

The peoples of the country were freed from oppression and exploitation by the Great October Revolution of 1917. Absolute political equality for all was established immediately. A week after the workers and poor peasants came to power the Soviet government, headed by Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Russian Communists, adopted the Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia. This declaration proclaims:

1. The equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia;
2. The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, including secession and the formation of their own states;
3. The abolition of all and any national or national-religious privileges and restrictions;
4. The free development of the national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting Russia's territory.

The Soviet government's Appeal to All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East proclaimed: "Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable. Arrange your national life freely and without hindrance. You have a right to that."

All subsequent Soviet legislation has adhered firmly to this principle of freedom of conscience. Article 52 of the present Constitution of the USSR states: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited."

Today nearly 50 million people of indigenous nationalities live in areas where the population traditionally professes Islam. It is not known, however, how many of these people are Muslims, because a census of religious worshippers has never been taken in the Soviet Union. One's attitude to religion is considered to be an entirely private matter. It can be said with confidence that if one believes in God, if one wants to pray, then one prays. No one has the right to prevent a person from taking part in religious worship.

Separation of the church and the state was established in the very first days of the existence of the Soviet state. The privileged position which the Christian Orthodox Church had held under the tsarist regime was abolished permanently. The freedom and complete equality of all religions, including Islam, was established. This policy in regard to religion, including Islam, remains unchanged to the present day.

More than a hundred nations and ethnic groups in the Soviet Union formed a friendly and voluntary union for the first time in the history of man. This union was established on the basis of the Leninist nationalities policy.

The most important result of the October 1917 Revolution was the formation of the voluntary socialist federation, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in December 1922. The revolution brought an end to national and social oppression and inspired the peoples to build a new life. The USSR became a living embodiment of Lenin's ideas and of the principles of his nationalities policy. Indeed, the peoples of the once backward outlying regions of tsarist Russia have moved directly from feudalism to socialism, bypassing the capitalist stage of development. A feeling of brotherhood has grown amongst the working people. Furthermore, the extremely important question concerning the equal economic, social and cultural development of different peoples has been solved. Relations of genuine equality, fraternal mutual assistance, cooperation, respect and mutual trust have been established between the socialist nations. The Soviet Union is a monolithic, strong and dynamic alliance of nations. Believers and non-believers enjoy the same rights and are working together for the good of their country.

After the 1917 Socialist Revolution, man and his well-being became a matter of primary concern for the state and the main object of its policy for the first time in history. The primary tasks of the newly-formed government of the people were various: to improve working conditions; to raise the material and cultural standards of living; to ensure that the people live and work in peace, have confidence in the morrow and raise children without fear for their future.

How the country has changed since then! Tens of thousands of major industrial enterprises and power stations, including nuclear power plants, have been built. Thousands of new towns have grown. Networks of roads and gas pipelines have been laid throughout the country. Canals and irrigation systems have been built, and an integrated power grid has been constructed. Intensive space exploration is under way.

Economic growth, however, is not an end in itself in a

socialist state, but rather a means used to ensure the good living conditions which all working people deserve. There has been no unemployment in the USSR since October 1930. The right of all people to work is not merely a proclamation in the Soviet Constitution. This right is guaranteed by the fact that jobs are sufficient in number and this number is steadily growing. The country's economy develops according to plan and thus is not subject to economic crises and recessions. Muslims in the USSR, like all Soviet citizens, are guaranteed this right to work, as well as the right to equal pay for equal work.

As was stated earlier, Soviet Muslims live in the republics of the Russian Federation, Soviet Central Asia and Transcaucasia. The economic potential of these republics is great, and their economic development has been in no way inferior to that of other republics and regions within the Soviet Union. Every citizen in every republic is offered the opportunity to work and to study, and for those who are talented—to be creative. And one can take advantage of these opportunities either at home or at any other place.

It is inconceivable that a young person in the Soviet East, even if his family is Muslim, would be compelled to leave home in search of work or the illusion of happiness abroad. But young people are mobile by nature. They yearn to travel and to explore new places, where they feel challenged and feel they can prove their personal worth.

And for this reason people of the Eastern nationalities are to be found living and working far from their native land, in almost every part of the country, in the most western areas of the Soviet Union and in the Soviet Far East, in the central regions and in the Far North. They work as builders, assemblymen, welders, hydrologists, concrete workers, electricians and in other highly skilled positions in various trades and professions. And everywhere, in every part of this vast country, these people are welcome as colleagues, friends and companions-in-work. When a worker arrives at a construction site no one asks if

he is a Muslim or not. A person's religious beliefs are considered to be an entirely private affair. But then he will be asked, of course, if he has a good place to live and, if the need arises, he will be offered help in finding accommodations, warm clothing and food. He will be helped in settling down in the new and strange environment and will be given the job for which he travelled.

The Socialist Revolution of 1917 enabled the peoples of this country, and those of the East as well, to live in friendship and to stand shoulder to shoulder in forming a single powerful front. A new society has been built on the basis of mutual trust and assistance. There are both worshippers and atheists in this new society, but no one is humiliated or insulted on the grounds of religious belief or nationality.

There are no oppressors and no one is oppressed. Within the Soviet Union there are more than a hundred different nations and nationalities, whose people speak 130 different languages and use five different alphabets. But despite the vast variety of languages, cultures and customs, the people of the Soviet Union are bound closely together in that they not only share a common historical destiny, but the same homeland as well.

The Country Calls

On June 22, 1941 Nazi Germany treacherously violated its non-aggression pact with the USSR and moved its troops across Soviet borders. The peoples of the Soviet East, including both the religious and non-religious, joined the rest of the Soviet population in rising to the defence of the homeland. The validity and viability of the Leninist policy on nationalities, as well as the very strength of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were put to a severe test by this war.

This war was not simply a battle between the armed forces of two belligerent powers, but rather a mortal clash: the forces of extreme imperialist reaction and fascism versus the forces of progress, revolution and socialism. And this war involved much more than just the fate of the Soviet state, for fascism sought to achieve world domination.

The social, political and spiritual unity of the multinational Soviet people, combined with the strength of the Soviet Armed Forces and the unity of the front and the rear, proved to be a clearly invincible force in the course and outcome of this most ferocious war. The peoples of the Soviet Union joined together to form a close-knit family and it is this family that became the primary hero of the war known as the Great Patriotic War.

Russians, Kazakhs, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Byelorussians, Tajiks, Turkmenians and Latvians—the sons and daughters of all Soviet nations and nationalities—all fought

together shoulder to shoulder in the war that had been waged across a vast expanse from the White Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. Many fearless heroes went down in history side by side, and their names are forever stenciled in gold: Alexander Matrosov and Agadil Shukhambayev, Nikolai Gastello and Nurken Abdirov, Ivan Pavlov and Tyulegen Takhtarov. Over seven million soldiers and officers were decorated with orders and medals of the USSR. Over 11,000 were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, including 161 Tatars, 96 Kazakhs, 67 Uzbeks, 44 Azerbaijanians, 38 Bashkirs, 16 Turkmenians, 15 Tajiks, and 12 Kirghiz.

A Turkmenian soldier, Shirli Ishaniyazov, wrote in his letter to the army newspaper *Patriot Rodiny:* "Let our mothers and fathers back in Turkmenia know that here, near Stalingrad, men of various nationalities are fighting the enemy together shoulder to shoulder, and are bound together by a single oath of loyalty and brotherhood. A Kazakh from Alma-Ata, a Tatar from Kazan, and a Russian from Novgorod are fighting by my side. We have vowed to be friends forever and always, and we will keep this vow."

Mikhail Kalinin, Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, at that time stated: "More and more the Nazis are coming to understand exactly what they are dealing with in the case of the Soviet Union. At one time, they thought of Soviet soldiers as Russians. But now it is clear that the soldiers, and good soldiers too, are not only Russians. A Soviet soldier may be a Turkmenian, a Kazakh, an Uzbek or an Azerbaijanian. The unity of our peoples during this war is one the world has never before known."

Because the country's western regions were threatened by enemy occupation, a vast evacuation plan had to be carried out. Many industries, power stations, great amounts of agricultural machinery and millions of heads of livestock were removed from the country's western regions in the first months of the war. About 2,750 industrial enterprises and over 20 million people were evacuated from the frontline

zones. Never before in history had there been such a mass migration of people or such a large transfer of machinery and material goods.

The people and material goods were transferred and reinstalled in an area east of the River Volga, in the Urals, in Siberia, and in the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The evacuees were welcomed and treated as brothers by the peoples in the country's eastern regions, who shared everything they had: food, shelter, clothing and fuel. The local residents and the evacuees joined together in the enormous effort to reconstruct and restart the factories transferred from the country's western regions. Production began in the factories within two or three months. The entire country was dedicated to one task: "Everything for the front, everything for victory!" Everyone—men, women, pensioners, teenagers—all worked together tirelessly, giving their best effort to win the war.

The Nazis had mobilized an immense army and furthermore drew on the production power and economic resources of the countries they had conquered in Europe. In the initial phases of the war, therefore, Nazi forces held a definite superior position in terms of manpower and military equipment in comparison to that of the Soviet Armed Forces. The Nazis manufactured more metal and had more tanks, guns, aircraft, submachine guns, simply more of everything. But through the course of the war this superiority gradually diminished and by 1943 ceased to exist. The superiority of the Soviet Union grew as the Soviet production of all the major types of weaponry grew steadily, in both quantity and quality. By the end of the war the strength of the Soviet Armed Forces in terms of the number of soldiers had doubled, and in terms of military and combat equipment had doubled and even tripled.

This was accomplished because the entire rear zone, including the Soviet Eastern republics, had turned into a powerful arsenal of military power. With their dedicated

and selfless effort, the farmers in the field and the workers in the town joined together and forged toward victory.

In 1942, for example, farmers in Uzbekistan tripled the sown area and grain production as compared to the year 1940. Thousands of hectares of land were sown for the planting of sugar beets and refineries were built for the production of sugar in Uzbekistan for the first time in history. The soldiers, the wounded, the workers, the miners and the children were all in dire need of this sugar.

In Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, a bronze monument in honour of the local blacksmith Shaakhmed Shamakhmudov and his wife Bakhra was erected on the Friendship of Peoples Avenue. They gave shelter and parental love and care to thirteen children of ten different nationalities who had been orphaned during the war. These children grew up in this family and worked and played together as true brothers and sisters. Today they are all educated men and women with families and children of their own. Some of them even have grandchildren. The monument in Tashkent will stand forever as a symbol of friendship between the Soviet peoples, of internationalism, and of people's nobility. And there were many people like the Shamakhmudovs.

The country was terribly scarred as a result of the war: 1,710 cities and towns, as well as 70,000 villages were destroyed; 32,000 factories lay in ruins; 65,000 kilometres of railways were demolished. Twenty million Soviet people had been killed, tens of millions were crippled, and twenty-five million people were left homeless.

Because the Eastern republics had not been occupied by the enemy, their industrial and agricultural production increased greatly during the war. These republics gave considerable assistance to the country's war-ravaged areas in the years of postwar restoration. While large amounts of equipment were transported from the country's western and central regions before the war, after the war industrial raw materials, fuel, food, machinery and thousands of

heads of livestock were brought from the east to the west. Soldiers of Eastern nationalities exchanged their weapons for tools and took an active part in rebuilding the factories, mines, power stations and cities which had been destroyed by the enemy. The peoples of the Soviet Union achieved yet another historic feat with their joint efforts to rebuild the country: by 1948 the level of industrial output was equal to that of the prewar years, and by 1950 the setback suffered in agricultural production as a result of the war had been overcome.

Because the eastern areas of the country had not suffered the horrors of enemy invasion, it might have seemed logical to channel all the country's resources into the economic recovery of the war-ravaged regions and postpone, for the time being, further development in the eastern areas. The Soviet government, however, did not consider this logical. The very first five-year plan following the war (1946-1950) envisaged several major projects to ensure further economic development of the Eastern republics, and this practice has continued to this day.

Their Fathers' Faith

This booklet depicting the life of Muslims in the Soviet Union includes photographs of Islamic shrines and architectural monuments as well as portraits of religious worshippers and their leaders at prayer. These Muslims are often venerable, white-bearded men who are greatly respected and well known among their own people. The majority of them have grown up during the years since the establishment of Soviet government, which will soon celebrate its 70th anniversary. These people practise their religion freely, living by the laws of their faith and honouring the customs of their fathers. And at the same time they abide by the laws of the socialist state and the moral principles of socialist society. The people of the Muslim faith, therefore, are not only respected by their fellow Muslims, but by every Soviet citizen, regardless of faith.

The pictures of prayer meetings depict typical, everyday scenes. Muslims gather for prayer wherever they live, and wherever Muslims live, there are mosques. There are several hundred grand mosques in various cities and thousands of mosques in various town districts and villages. Under Soviet law Muslim communities are guaranteed the right to rent prayer houses and to build new mosques, and are given every opportunity to take advantage of this right. Building sites are donated free of charge and the necessary building materials are available for purchase.

Considerable funds, of course, are required to build and keep the mosques in good repair, as well as to maintain and

train clergymen. But although the Soviet state provides its citizens, including Muslims, with free housing, education, medical aid and social security, the state does not in any way interfere in the canonical and financial affairs of religious communities. Their incomes are not subject to taxation and certain articles used for worship are available without charge. Religious communities are able to purchase not only buildings, but also vehicles of transportation and other property, manufacture objects used in worship and other goods. Furthermore, religious organizations have the right to publish religious literature.

The state guarantees that the rights of religious associations and their individual members shall be observed. Those who violate these rights must account for their actions in accordance with Soviet law.

Religion and religious ceremony are inseparable. A person who worships needs the symbols of his faith which are sanctified by religious tradition. Thus the right to perform religious rites and ceremonies in the USSR is granted in accordance with the right of freedom of conscience. Muslims are free to perform the religious rituals involved in such ceremonies as weddings, funerals and name-giving in accordance with the practices of their faith.

Four independent boards direct the activities and religious life of Muslim communities in the USSR. The Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan has its headquarters in the Barak Khan Madrasah, a vast, 16th-century architectural complex in Tashkent. This board is headed by Mufti Shamsuddin Khan ibn Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan, who was elected in 1982, having been nominated by his father, Mufti Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan, at a conference of religious representatives. The Muslim Board of the Soviet Union's European part and Siberia is located in Ufa, the capital of Bashkiria, and is headed by Mufti Talgat Tajuddin. The Muslim Board of the Northern Caucasus is located in Makhachkala, the capital of Daghestan, and is headed by Mufti Makhmoud

Ghekkiyev. The Muslim Board of Transcaucasia, headed by Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukyur Pasha-zade, is located in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

In a speech at the International Islamic conference held in Tashkent in 1976 the Mufti Ahmad ibn Muhammad Zabara of the Arab Republic of Yemen remarked on the great significance of the formation of the four Muslim Boards in the Soviet Union. The 1976 conference had been dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The Mufti of Yemen emphasized that the Board's activities in the last thirty years had been not only meaningful and useful but also had been considerably influential both inside and outside the USSR. The Board was credited for the understanding it had reached with the Soviet government which allowed Soviet Muslims to observe their religious rites in peace and freedom. The Mufti of Yemen expressed his hope that the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan would continue its activities in this correct direction with the same success.

The Muslim Boards of the USSR have various functions: the appointment of priests (imams and mullahs); the training of clergymen at the Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara and at the Imam al-Bukhari Islamic Institute in Tashkent; the directing of programmes which allow students to study abroad at the Shariat departments of universities in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon in order to improve their religious knowledge; the work on interpreting religious texts and preparing these texts for publication. Furthermore, the Muslim Boards convene the Ulema Councils, prepare and conduct religious congresses and conferences, including those on the international level, and meet with Muslim delegations from other countries. The Boards also participate in the restoration and maintenance of Islamic architectural monuments.

The annual pilgrimages of worshippers to Mecca are organized by the Muslim Boards as well.

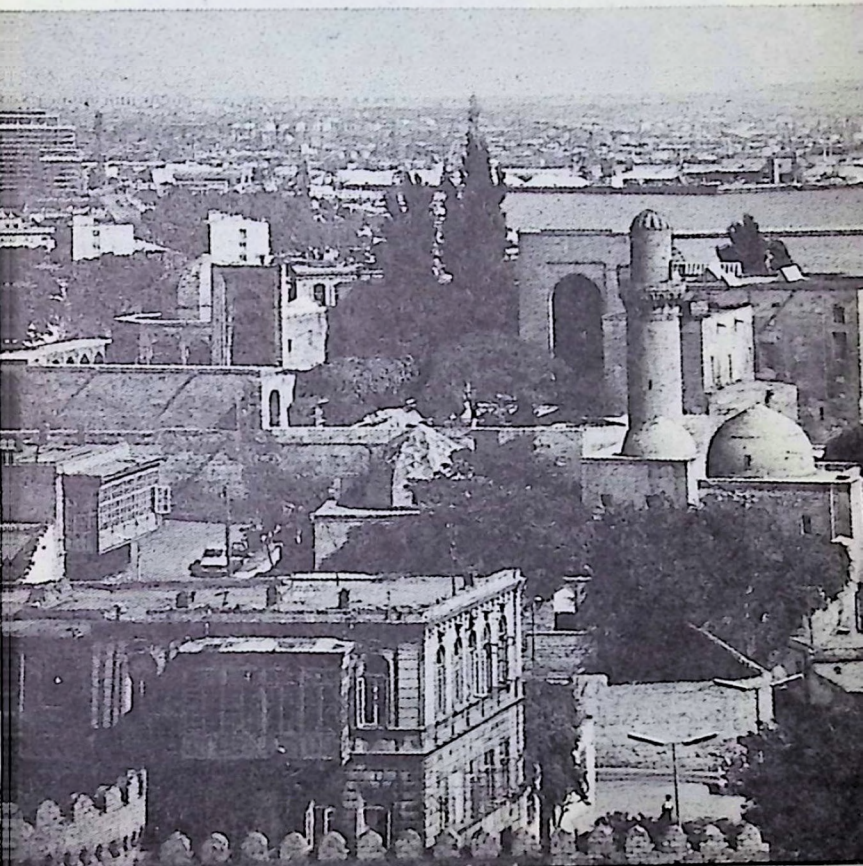
The Muslim Boards publish religious literature and in recent years have published seven different editions of the Koran. The magazine *Muslims of the Soviet East* is published in six languages, and lunar calendars are printed on a regular basis. The republishing of the Prophet Muhammad's pronouncements is another important activity of Muslim religious organizations. Imam al-Bukhari's works, *Al-Adab al Mufrad* and *Al-Jani as-Sahih*, were published in Tashkent on the 1,200th anniversary of his birth. A record of readings from the Koran was released as well. *Islam and the Muslims in the Land of the Soviets*, by Mufti Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan, *A History of the Caliph Othman Koran Kept in Tashkent*, by Ismail Makhdoum Sattayev, deputy chairman of the Muslim Board of Ismail, and the important book *Muslims in the Soviet Union*, were all published in Tashkent. Futhermore, there are several outstanding photographic publications which depict in colour the most important architectural and historical monuments of Islam in the USSR.

The history of the Koran of Caliph Othman is especially noteworthy. According to legend, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad this Holy Koran had belonged to one of the first caliphs. The officials of tsarist Russia seized the Koran from the Muslims of Turkestan and placed it in the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg. Today the Caliph Othman Koran is kept in Tashkent, having been returned to the Muslims by the Soviet government after the October 1917 Revolution. The Muslim Boards have their own libraries which contain a substantial amount of religious literature, including very rare and valuable historic manuscripts. Muslims have free access to these materials.

The Council for Religious Affairs, under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, was established to guarantee the consistent implementation of the Soviet state's policy in regard to religion and the church. The objectives of this Council are: to ensure that legislation on religion is strictly observed; to review and evaluate the

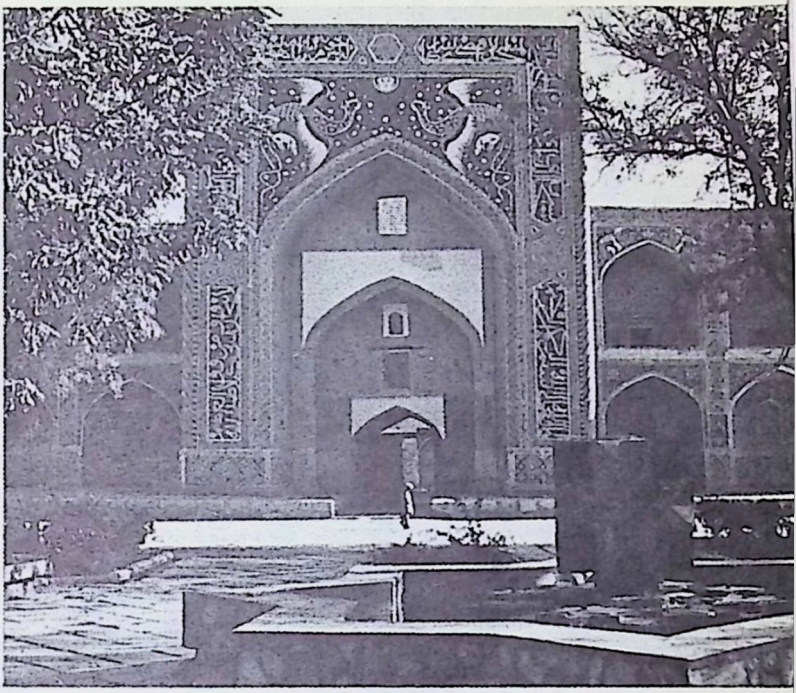
In the USSR Muslims live in the Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijan, Kirghiz, Tajik and Turkmen Union Republics, in the Daghestan, Chechen-Ingush, Tatar, Bashkir, and Kabardin-Balkar Autonomous Republics of the Russian Federation, and in other areas. In all these regions the ancient monuments of Islamic architecture and art and the national customs and traditions are being carefully preserved. Modern art and architecture in these areas are distinctly national in character and have much in common with the cultures of Oriental countries.

The Palace of the Shirvanshahs with a mosque and minaret in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan. This rare monument of medieval culture was built mainly in the 15th century.

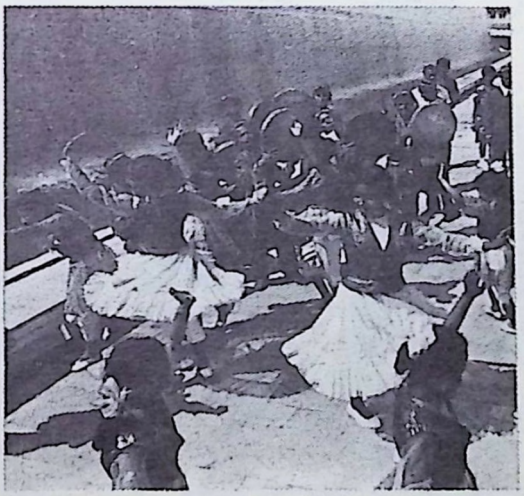


Apartment houses in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan.

Registan Square in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) is a remarkable monument of 15th-17th century architecture.



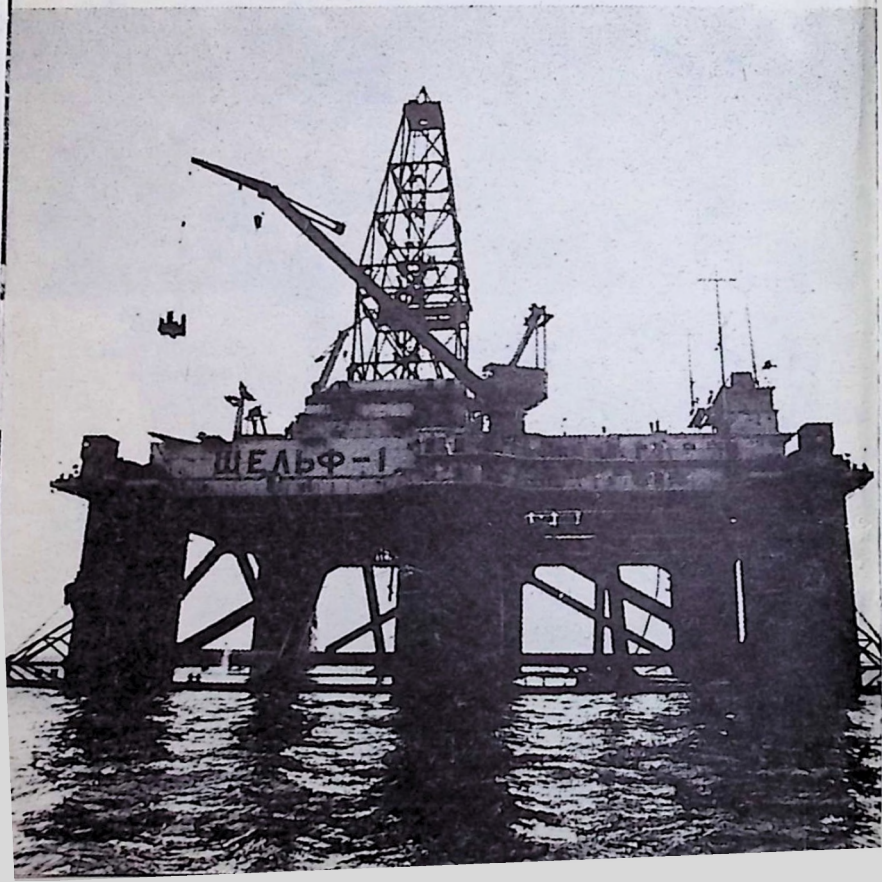
The Mir Arab Madrasah (1536) in Bukhara (Uzbekistan).

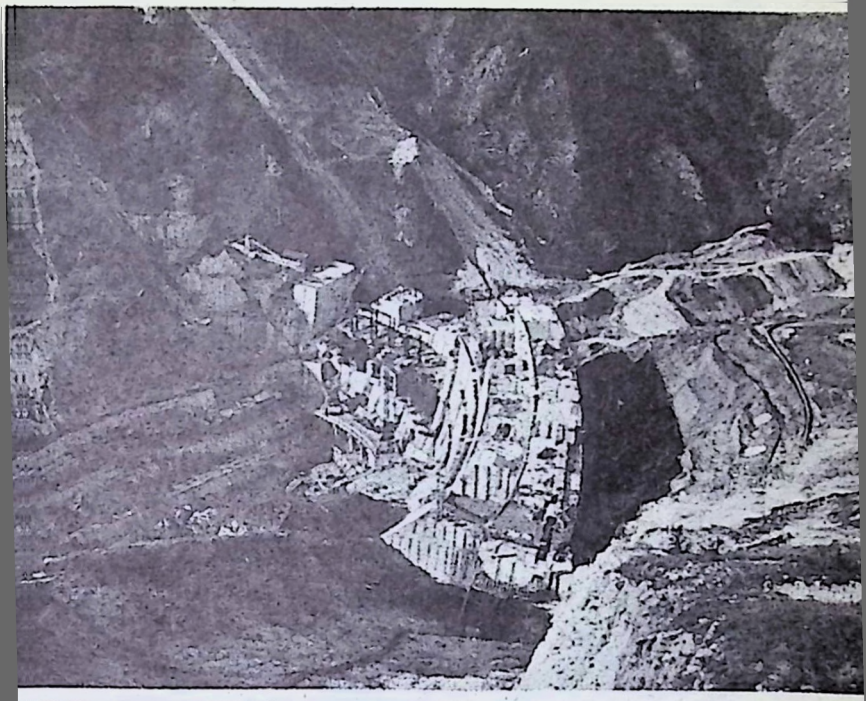


The Tashkent children's folk dance group (Uzbekistan).

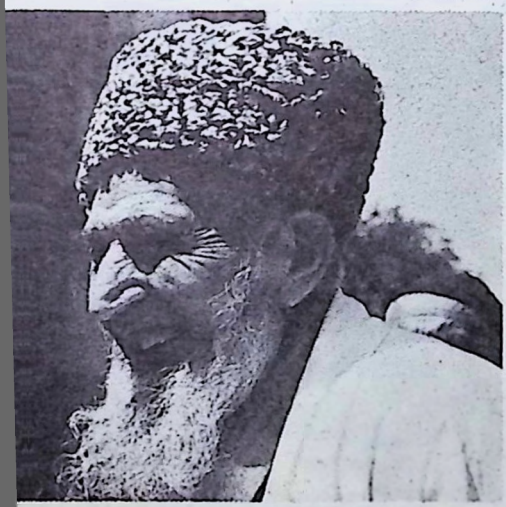
Before the October 1917 Socialist Revolution the areas where Muslims live were extremely backward in both economic and cultural terms. In these areas today, as in all the Soviet republics, industry and agriculture are highly advanced and national culture is flourishing.

The Shelf-1 drilling rig is part of the oil fields in the Caspian Sea off the Azerbaijanian shore.



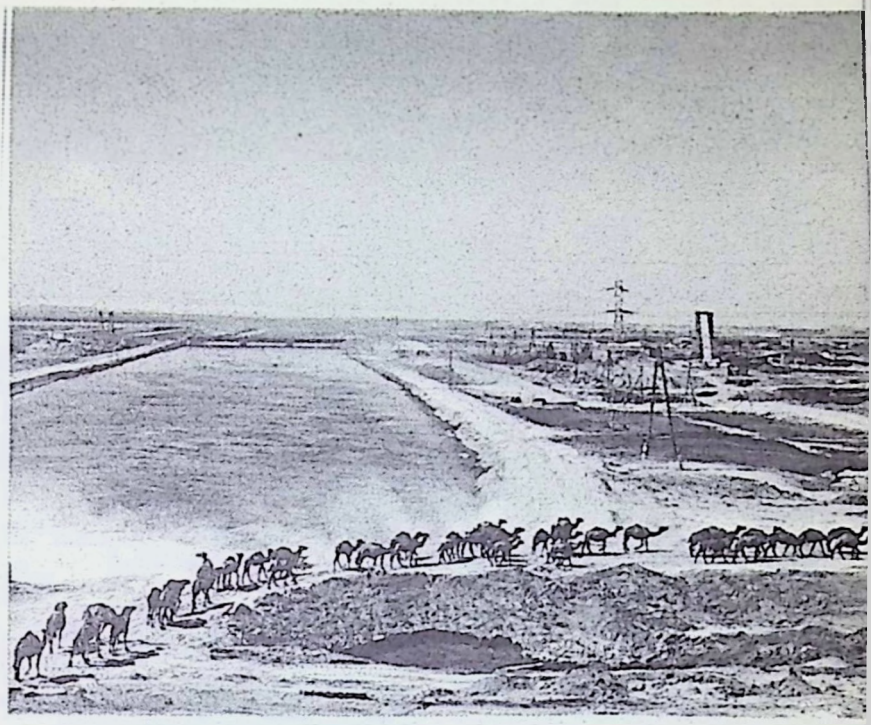


A view of the construction site of the Toktogul hydroelectric station on the River Naryn (Kirghizia). The power plant is now operating and has a capacity of 1,200 megawatts.



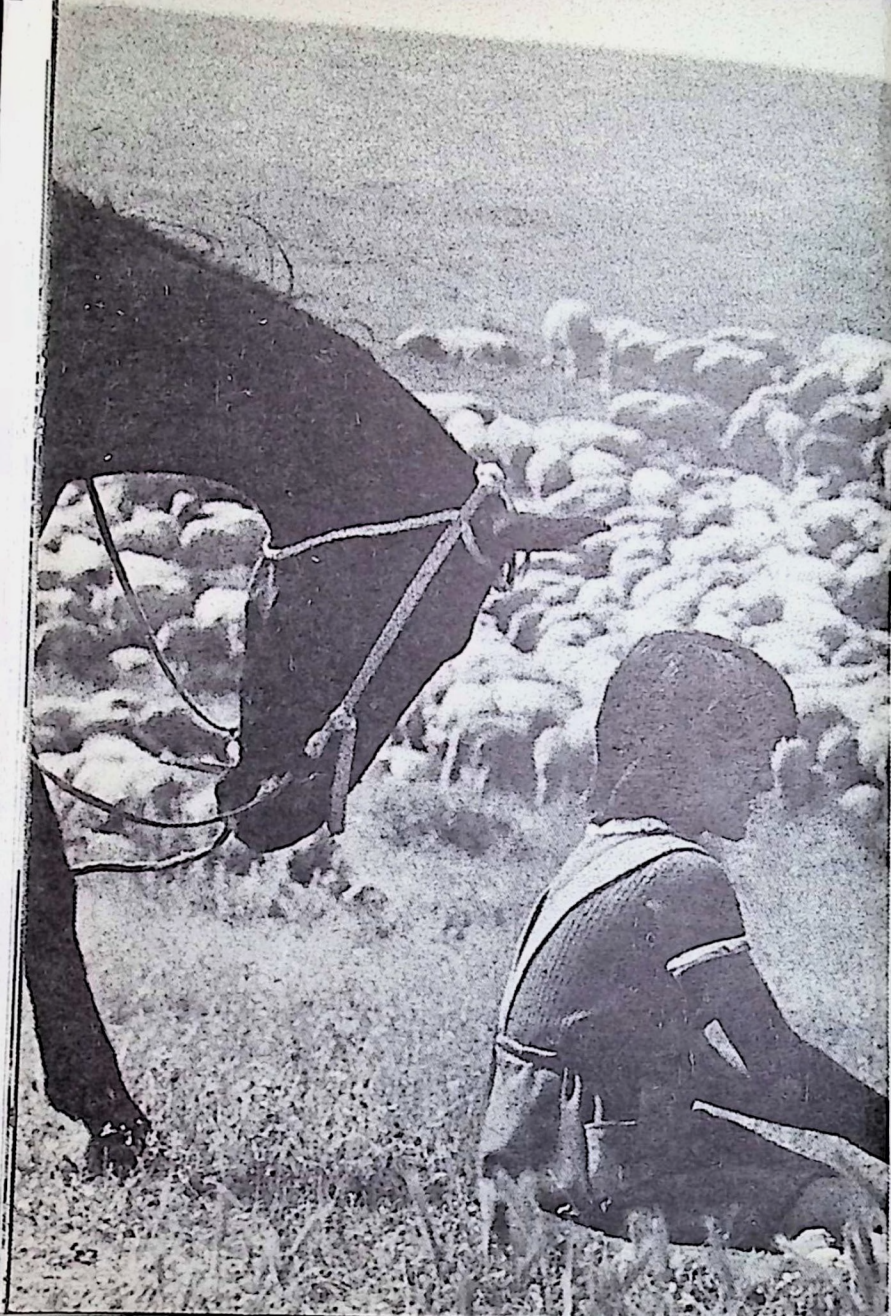
Ali Mamedov, a retired Azerbaijanian oil worker, lives in Baku.

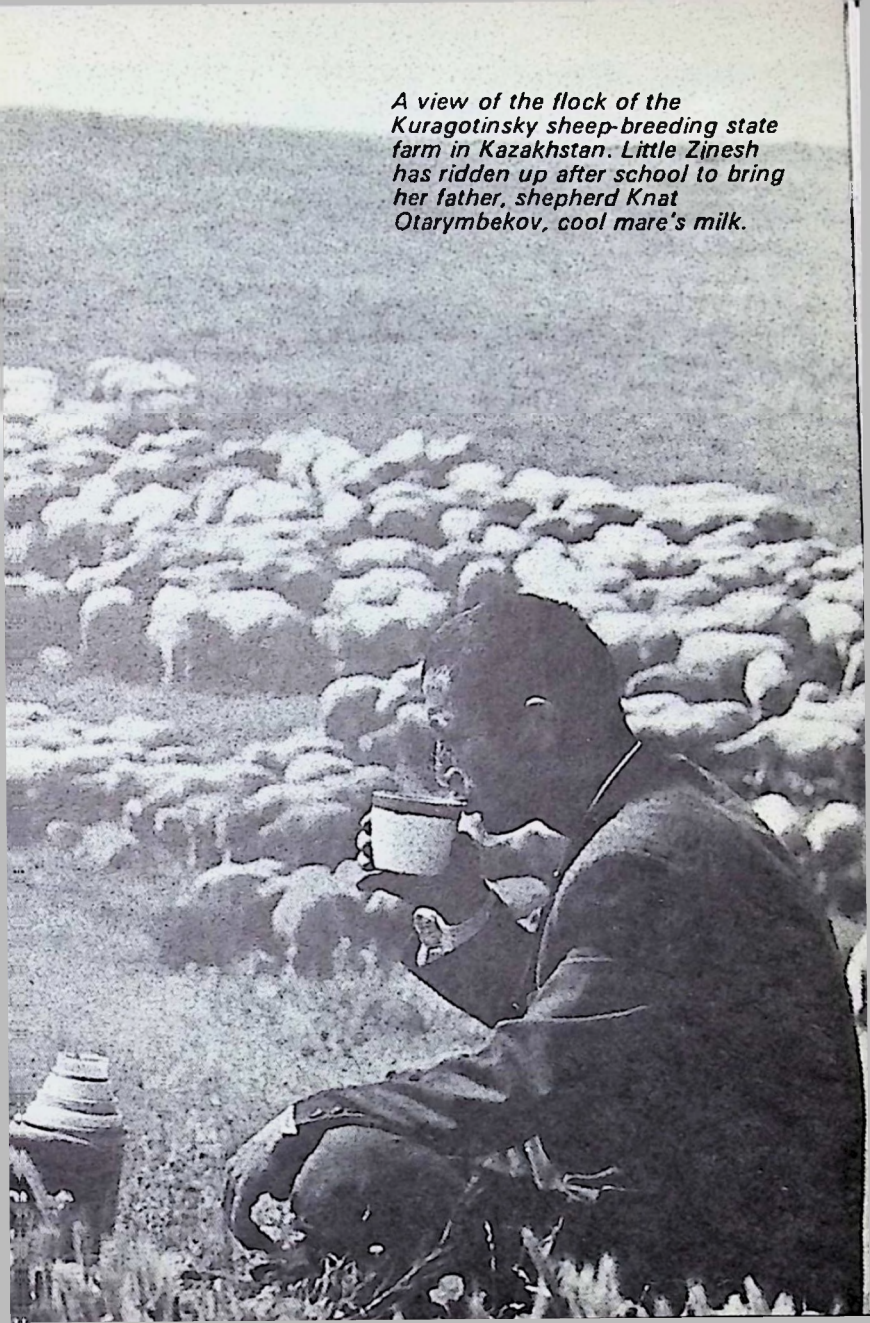
The control desk of the atomic power station in Shevchenko (Kazakhstan).



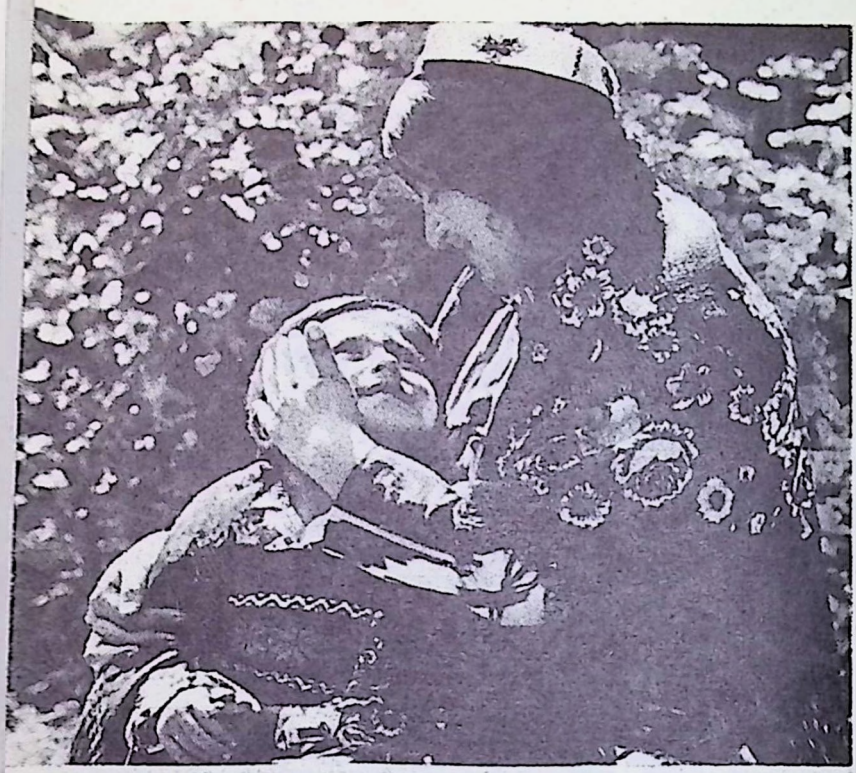
The navigable Kara Kum canal, which runs through Turkmenia, irrigates over 400,000 hectares of land and supplies water to more than five million hectares.

Anarbek Begimkulov of Uzbekistan wears the Order of Lenin and the Sickle and Hammer gold medal signifying that he has been awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour.





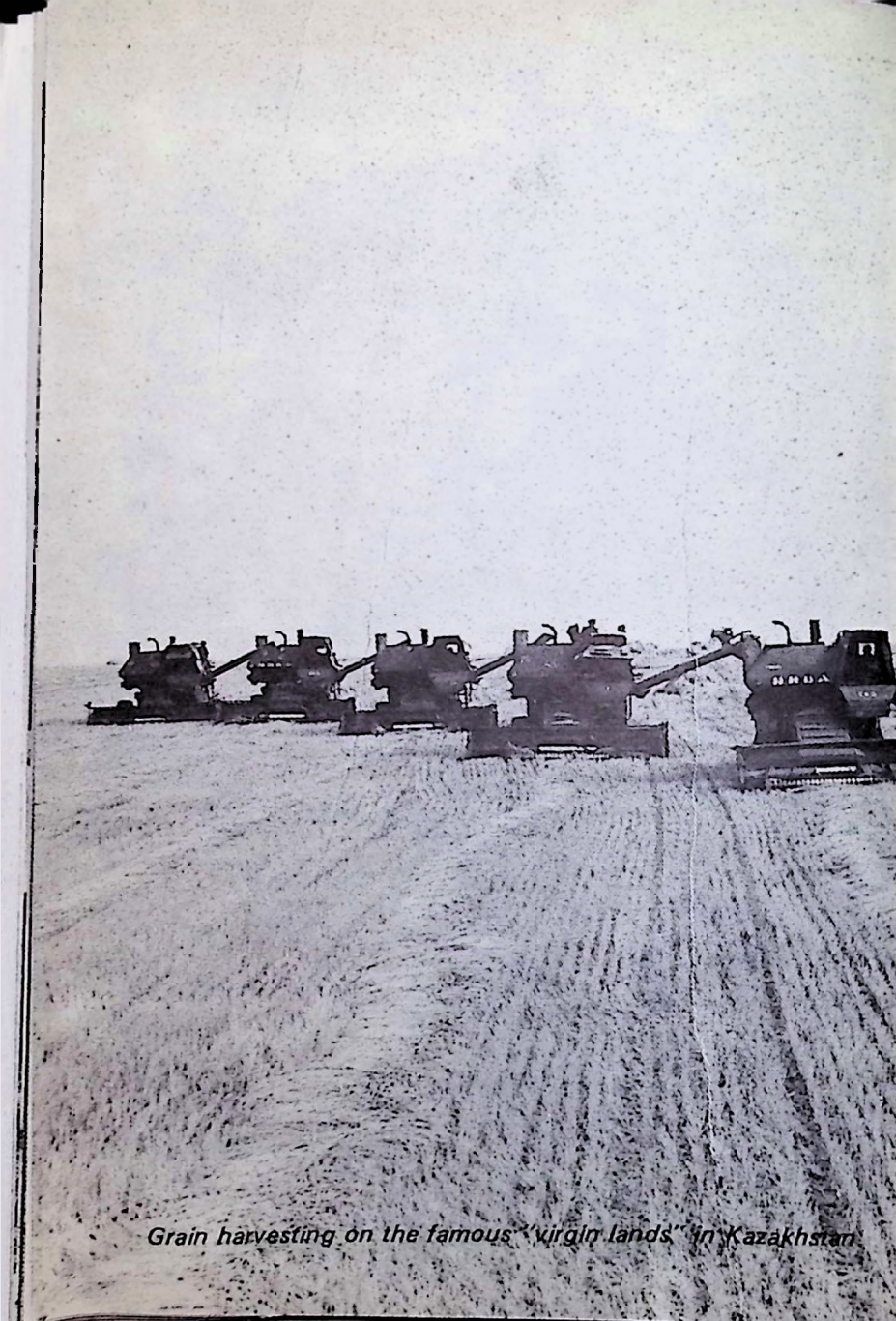
A view of the flock of the Kuragotinsky sheep-breeding state farm in Kazakhstan. Little Zinesh has ridden up after school to bring her father, shepherd Knat Otarymbekov, cool mare's milk.



Savrimo Ilnazarova, who works on a collective farm in the Pamirs (Tajikistan), with her son Khabib.

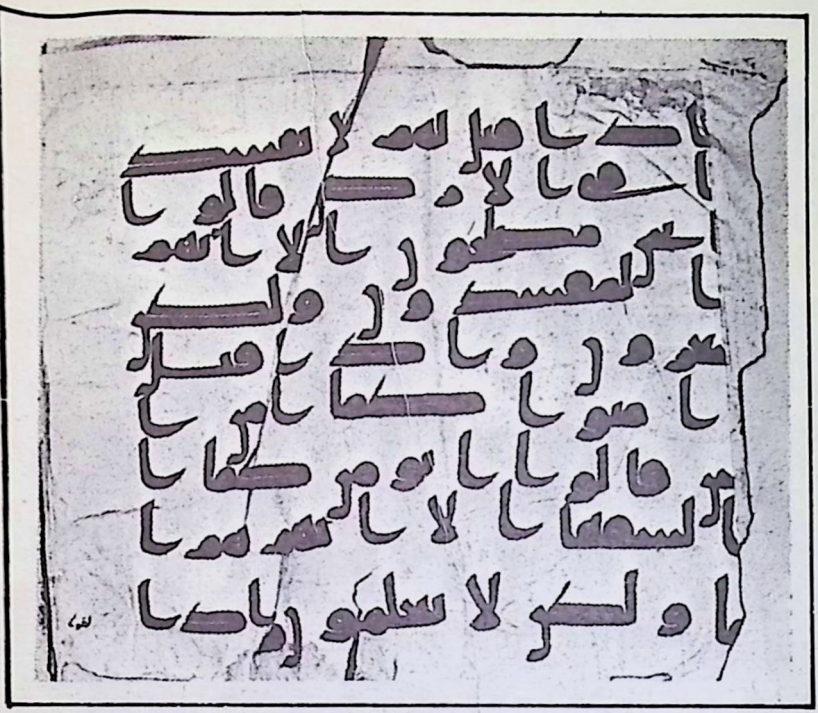
Musicians playing karnais, Uzbek brass trumpets, open a harvest festival in Uzbekistan.

A performance by the Zebo dance company of the Television and Radio Committee of the Tajik Republic.



Grain harvesting on the famous "virgin lands" in Kazakhstan

НИВА

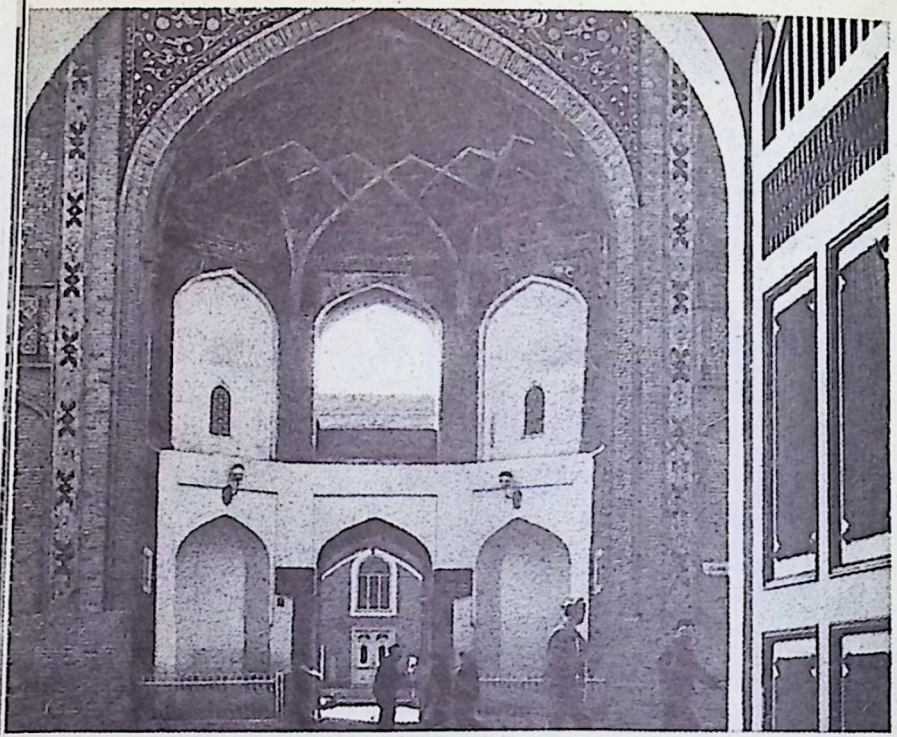


The first page of the ancient Othman Koran that is carefully preserved in Tashkent.

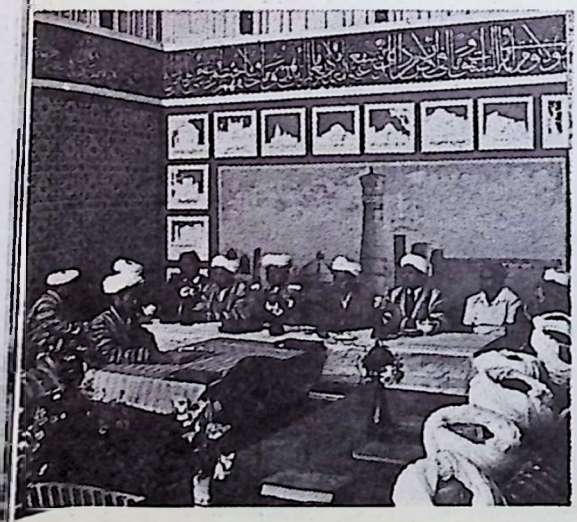
In accordance with the Constitution of the USSR, Muslims, like all other citizens, enjoy complete freedom of conscience. They have the right to maintain places of worship and educational institutions for training clergymen, publish religious literature and perform the rites and ceremonies prescribed by their faith. Ancient Islamic texts, madrasahs, mosques and sanctuaries are placed at the disposal of believers and are protected by law as valuable cultural monuments.

Inside a mosque in Uzbekistan.

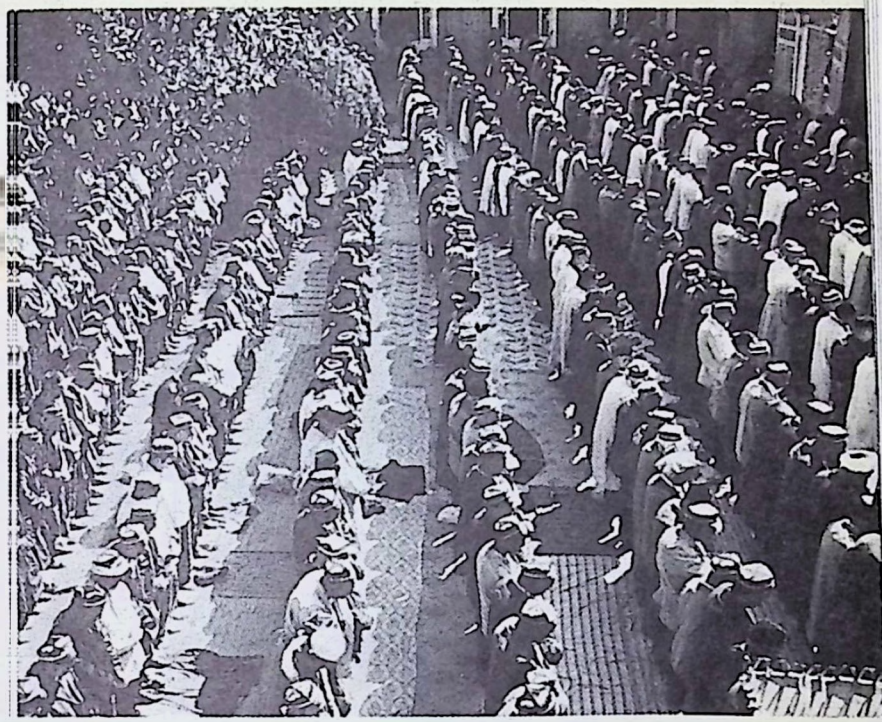
The main library of the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan contains nearly 2,000 manuscripts and over 30,000 printed works.



The Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan is located at the Barak Khan Madrasah (16th century) in Tashkent.



Graduation examinations at the Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.



Friday service at the Tilla Sheikh grand mosque in Tashkent.

Imam-khatib M. Sabitov addressing the faithful with a sermon on rural work in a mosque in Kurgan-Tyube (Tajikistan).

The Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan is located in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan. It is headed by Mufti Shamsuddin Khan ibn Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan.

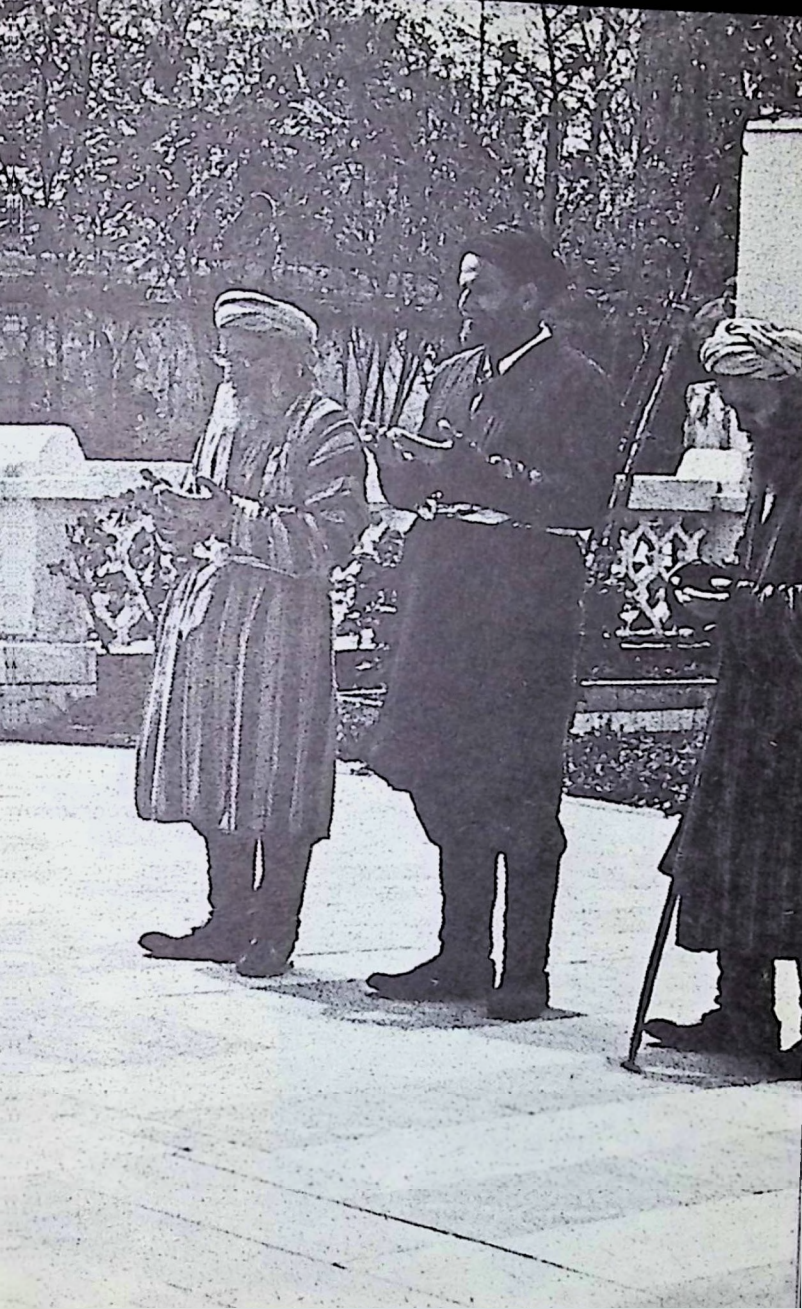
Four independent boards direct the religious life of Muslims in the USSR and the activity of the Islamic communities.

The Muslim Board of the Northern Caucasus is located in Makhachkala, capital of Daghestan, and is headed by Mufti Makhmoud Ghekkiyev.

The Muslim Board of Transcaucasia is located in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, and is headed by Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukyur Pasha-zade.

The Muslim Board of the European part of the USSR and Siberia is located in Ufa, capital of Bashkiria, and is headed by Mufti Talgat Tajuddin.

Muslims frequently visit the tomb of Yakub Charkhi in Tajikistan.



Imam-khatib Avazkhan Khaidarov with his family (Bukhara, Uzbekistan).

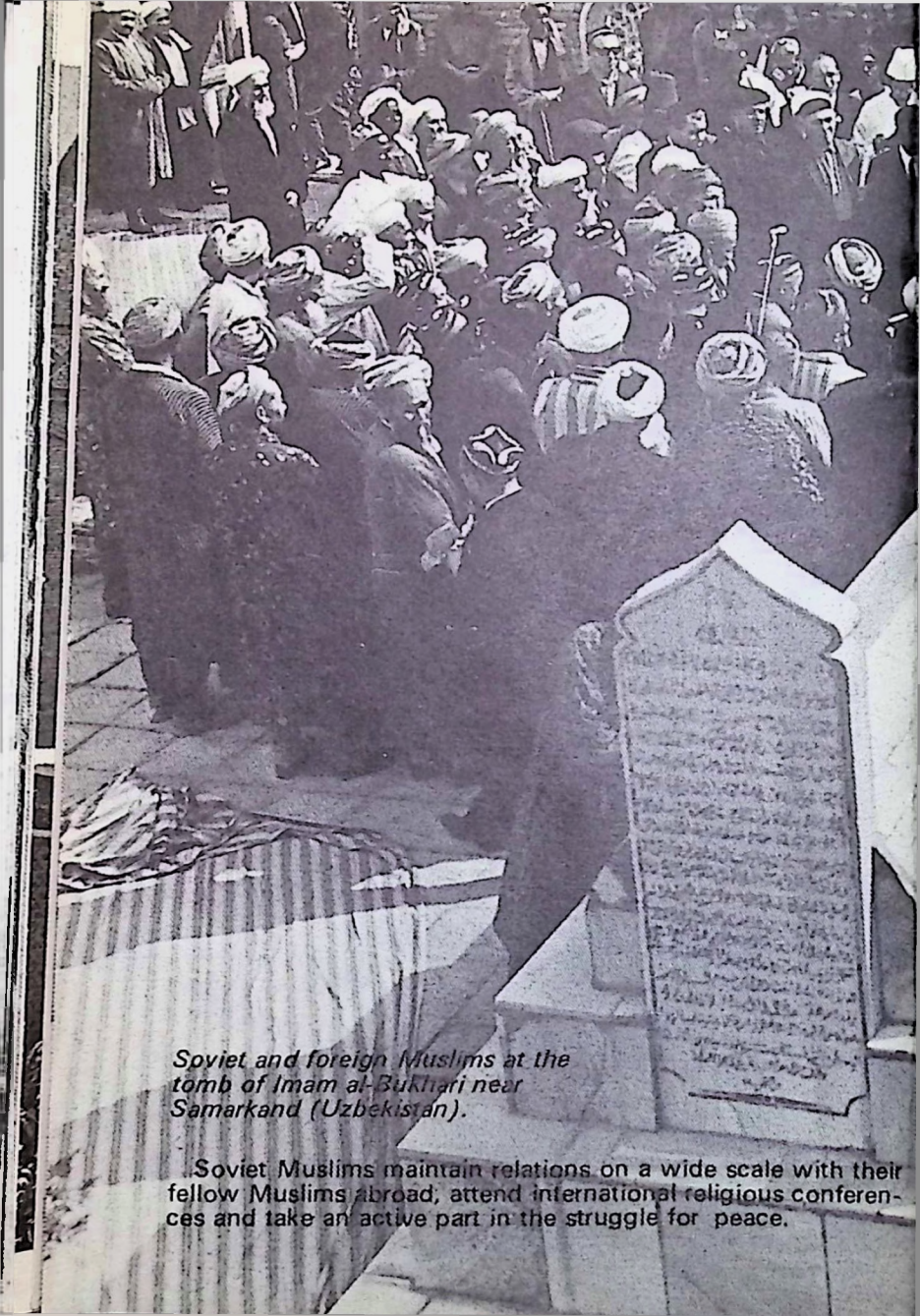
Imam-khatib Avazkhan Khaidarov leading a Friday service in a mosque.

Muslim women at prayer at a mosque in Chistopol (Tatar Autonomous Republic).

Kazi Ratbek Nasanbayev, representative for the Kazakh Republic at the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, talking with a fellow Muslim.

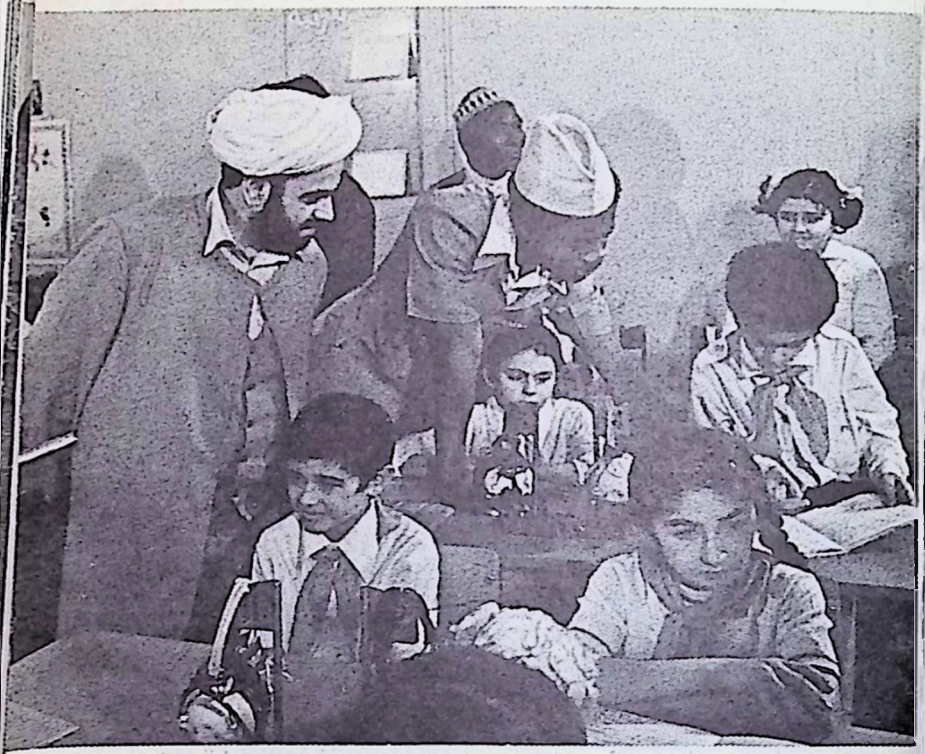
Muslims at prayer.

A Muslim wedding ceremony in Uzbekistan.



Soviet and foreign Muslims at the tomb of Imam al-Bukhari near Samarkand (Uzbekistan).

Soviet Muslims maintain relations on a wide scale with their fellow Muslims abroad, attend international religious conferences and take an active part in the struggle for peace.



Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukyur Pasha-zade, the head of the Muslim Board of Transcaucasia (centre), with foreign Muslims in Baku at a school where Arabic is taught.

Muslims from abroad at the Yakub Charkhi Mosque.

A sitting of the World Conference of Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe, Moscow, May 10, 1982.

Soviet and foreign Muslims near the Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara.

practical implementation of this legislation; to assist religious organizations in their international relations and in their work for peace and friendship among nations. Furthermore, the Council acts as a mediator between the USSR government and religious organizations when questions arise which require settlement by the government.

In the 13 centuries of the history of Islam, many splendid architectural monuments to Islam have been erected in Transcaucasia and in Central Asia.

The first mosque in Bukhara, for example, was built in the Mokh Bazaar at the beginning of the 8th century on the site of a pre-Islamic shrine. Mosques in Central Asia began to be built on a large scale from about the year 730.

The first Islamic mausoleums in Central Asia were built in the 10th century. Over the centuries these mausoleums were built in an increasingly grand and majestic style. They were lavishly decorated by coloured tiles, glazed-tile mosaic, carvings on *ganch* (a mixture of plaster and clay), and colourful ornaments and paintwork.

Still another kind of decorative architecture emerged at the beginning of the second millennium with the construction of madrasahs and, later, *khanaks*, which are refuges for wandering dervishes. These masterpieces of Islamic architecture, as well as the palaces of kings and other rulers, stand as monuments to the many centuries of inspired work, talent and genius of architects and craftsmen.

Every monument of architectural, artistic or historical value bears a plaque beginning with the words: "Protected by the State".

These monuments are protected and preserved by the state from possible thievery, neglect and decay. The preservation of these monuments demands considerable funds, materials, manpower and machinery. Restoration experts consult with prominent archeologists and historians on the work involved in the protection of monuments. Experienced industrial specialists and master craftsmen, who are

skilled in the preservation and restoration of paint colour, ceramics and ornaments, work on these projects as well. Many masterpieces which were considered to be beyond repair have been restored. Thus numerous shrines revered throughout the Islamic world as jewels of Oriental architecture have been preserved.

In the 11th century the major necropolis Shahi Zindeh began developing in Samarkand around the tomb of Kussam ibn Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad. This tomb later became a magnificent mausoleum. In the 14th and 15th centuries Timur and his grandson Ulugh Beg extended Shahi Zindeh considerably. Today it is one of the major necropolises in the Islamic East, a unique collection of masterpieces of architecture and decorative art. And since the time of Timur the Kussam ibn Abbas mausoleum has been visited by many Muslims.

There are many other unique and truly precious monuments and works of architecture. In Samarkand the Bibi Khanym Mosque, which was wrecked by earthquakes, is under restoration. The formidable Timur himself supervised the completion of its construction in 1404. Next to the mosque stands the structure Registan, which shines of gold and turquoise. Ulugh Beg built the first madrasah of the Registan. The ribbed turquoise dome of the Gur Emir mausoleum, where Timur is buried with his eldest son and grandchildren, rises majestically to the sky. Timur's tombstone, built on the orders of Ulugh Beg, is a monolith of dark-green Chinese jade, and weighs more than a ton.

Another eternal monument of ancient art is the mausoleum of Ismail Samani, the second vicegerent of the Arab caliphs in Central Asia. This mausoleum, located in the outskirts of Bukhara, was built more than a thousand years ago. The famous Kalyan minaret in Bukhara and the minarets in Vabkent and Djarkurgan, whose towers rise triumphantly to the sky, were all built in the 12th century.

The beautiful Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara was erected four and a half centuries ago. Today it stands as

magnificent as ever, continuing to delight visitors with the exquisite ornamentation of the tombs of Ubaidulla Khan and of Mir Arab of Yemen. And the Abdul Aziz Khan Madrasah in Bukhara, built in 1652, is incredibly ornamental, especially in its interior decoration.

There are many palaces, madrasahs and mosques of eternal beauty in Khiva. Two minarets which are particularly outstanding in their decoration are of the Juma Mosque and the Islam Khoja. Several of the splendidly carved columns of the grand Juma Mosque date back to the beginning of this millennium.

It is impossible to enumerate every masterpiece of Oriental architecture to be found in the USSR. And although a great deal has been written about them, historians, architects and artists continue to study these masterpieces. People travel from all over the world to admire these exquisite works of ancient art.

Many of these splendid edifices are to this day used as places of worship and religious instruction. The Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara, for instance, is used as a religious school, and in Baku, the majestic Azhdar Bek Mosque is still functioning.

On Fridays and feast days prayers and services are held five times in mosques. The mosque also serves as a source of knowledge of the Islamic faith. And as the faithful offer their prayers, either within the mosque or at the foot of an Islamic shrine, it is not difficult to inderstand the passion of their faith. Not only did their grandfathers and great-grandfathers come to pray here, but their distant ancestors, many centuries ago, worshipped here as well.

The Delight of Knowledge

For many centuries the broad masses had no access to knowledge.

The literacy rate in tsarist Russia just barely passed 28 per cent, while among the Kirghiz, Turkmenians, Uzbeks and Kazakhs it ranged from between 0.5 and two per cent. "Natives" were forbidden to study in their own languages, and their access to schools was strictly limited. No written language existed for dozens of nationalities and ethnic groups.

After the October 1917 Revolution the Soviet government established a system of public education which provided for universal and free schooling for all children, regardless of sex. The school was separated from the church, and all private schools were closed. The right to conduct instruction in the native language of the people was established for all nationalities. For the first time in history alphabets were developed for the Kirghiz, the Bashkirs and for ethnic groups in Daghestan—the Avars, Lezgins, Dargins, Laks, Kumyks and Tabasarans. Schools and literacy courses for adults were established all over the country. According to census, by 1939 the literacy rate in Turkmenia had already reached 77.7 per cent, while in Kazakhstan it had reached 83.6 per cent. By 1970 the literacy rate had reached 99.6-99.7 per cent in all republics of the USSR.

Today more than a quarter of the population in the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus are students.

Islamic leaders are well aware of the importance and

value of broad, well-rounded education. In discussions with worshippers, these leaders emphasize the importance for young people to study diligently. In one of his sermons Imam Latypov of the Orenburg Mosque stated: "Dear Muslim brethren, in our day and age one cannot live without knowledge, without science. Islam views the study of sciences as a most noble pursuit. Therefore we should all study and engage in creative endeavour. Dear young people, I urge you to not waste your time, to study and adorn yourselves with knowledge and science. Dedicate your efforts to your country. The country and the people expect much of you. Do not forget that you are the hope and pride of your country... Love and care for your country as it loves and cares for you. Be patriots!"

The Imam's words are just and true. Muslims in the USSR are keeping in step with the pace of the modern world. Muslims and their children are granted the opportunity and right, as are all Soviet citizens, to acquire the knowledge necessary for modern life. They are full-fledged members of society, living comfortably and deriving personal satisfaction as they develop and apply their talents and skills in modern life.

The Soviet youth have been granted a gift of great significance: the right to learn a profession or skill in the field of one's choice. Vocational institutions for the training of factory workers were established immediately after the 1917 Revolution, and since that time tens of millions of people have been trained as skilled workers. In order to accommodate the desires and aspirations of future workers, these vocational schools now offer training in a great variety of trades. Young people receive this training free of charge and the state provides them with a stipend as well.

The second level of the Soviet educational system is that of specialized secondary schools. Students enrolled in these institutions receive extensive theoretical and practical training. As a rule, their graduates work in industry as foremen

or team leaders and are often appointed superintendents of shifts, production sections or shops.

Universities and colleges are the institutions of higher learning. There are a total of 891 institutions of higher learning in the USSR, including 65 universities. Each of the Eastern republics has its own university, while in Uzbekistan there are three. University students, as well as students at specialized secondary schools, receive stipends.

The system of higher education in the Eastern republics is continually expanding and improving, as is the educational system throughout the country. The number of students and institutions of higher learning is steadily increasing. In Uzbekistan, for example, there are 43 schools of higher learning, not including the universities previously mentioned. There are 55 institutions of higher learning in Kazakhstan, 18 in Azerbaijan, ten in Kirghizia and Tajikistan, eight in Turkmenia, nine in Bashkiria, and five in Daghestan. Female students make up about half of the student body at every university, specialized secondary and vocational school.

The curriculum is identical at all similar institutions. Instruction is given in the national language of each republic. If the students prefer, or the need arises, instruction is given in Russian.

All secondary school certificates and higher school diplomas are of equal value. Thus any student who has completed a secondary school in any republic can enroll in any college or university in the country. Furthermore, graduates of educational institutions can work in any city or republic of their choosing.

Instruction at all Soviet schools, both secondary and higher, is modern and scientifically based. These schools are truly internationalist in nature. Many nationalities are represented in the student body of every educational institution in the USSR. Students are free to choose the institute or college which best suits their personal interests and aspirations. Young people from the Soviet Eastern

republics study in both specialized secondary schools and higher schools in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk. Riga, Kharkov and other cities. Thousands of students from abroad, including students from Eastern countries, study in the Soviet Union as well. These students are accommodated in dormitories and there are no tuition fees. And for those who work there is an elaborate system of evening and correspondence schools.

College and university students are encouraged to carry on scientific research and to solve practical problems that arise at industrial enterprises. This practice guarantees that a student will be well trained in his field of study. In this way, the scientists, engineers and many other specialists of each of the Eastern republics have formed a national intelligentsia of their own.

The scientists of the Eastern republics hold a position of extreme importance in Soviet science. A large network of research centres has been established in areas where the illiteracy rate was at one time almost 100 per cent. There is an Academy of Sciences in each Union Republic. Branches of the USSR Academy of Sciences are located in the Bashkir, Daghestan and Tatar Autonomous Republics. The local nationalities are well represented at these national scientific centres. The parents and grandparents of many of these researchers were illiterate farmhands, shepherds or field waterers.

Before the 1917 Revolution an artificial wall barred millions of people in the country's East from enjoying cultural and aesthetic works of art. Although beautiful works of art had existed for centuries, the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of these works was denied to the working people, and granted only to the idle rich. The finest works of art were kept in palaces; only the rulers and their retinue had access to their beauty. Every beautiful work of art was taken away from the people and placed into the chambers of the mighty. The working people were thus robbed of

their right to enjoy the values of art and culture just as ruthlessly as they were robbed of everything else.

Lenin stated that art belongs to the people. He also remarked that without art it is impossible to express the beauty and grandeur of ideas. Culture and the spiritual and moral aspects of life are as important to the people as their country's economic potential. A person is the more humane the richer his inner world is.

The interaction between the country's various cultures has led to the constant enrichment of the treasure-house of Soviet multinational culture. Festivals of literature and art are held regularly in every republic. In Latvia, for example, a festival was held dedicated to literature and art of Uzbekistan; in Byelorussia a festival of literature and art of Kazakhstan; in Kirghizia a festival of literature and art of Moldavia. A festival of literature and art from each republic is held periodically in Moscow.

There is probably not a single factory, collective farm or state farm in the Soviet East that does not have an amateur artistic group and amateur performers of a wide variety of genres. Contemporary popular art and culture are powerful and grand because they are open to all and humane in character.

Art in the Soviet East is flourishing not only on the amateur level, but on the professional level as well. The Eastern republics have their own national film studios, and many of their productions have won broad recognition both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Opera houses, ballet companies, theatres of drama and comedy, as well as children's theatres have been established in the Eastern republics. Many brilliant actors, singers, ballet dancers, musicians and film stars have emerged. The Eastern peoples have been given invaluable assistance by the specialists in culture and art from the Russian Federation, the Ukraine and other Soviet republics. Many talented young men and women from the Eastern republics study at the Moscow institutes of drama and of cinematography, in the studios of

the Bolshoi Theatre and of the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre in Leningrad.

Among the writers, poets and playwrights who have gained nationwide and international fame are Chinghiz Aitmatov of Kirghizia, Mirzo Tursun-zade of Tajikistan, Kamil Yashen of Uzbekistan and Rasul Gamzatov of Daghestan.

Applied art has flourished in the East from ancient times. Articles of great artistic value have survived to our day: exquisite samples of ceramics, chasing, carving on stone, wood and *ganch*, jewellery, daggers and swords decorated with gold and precious stones, metal and porcelain dishes and vessels of rare artistic quality, pottery, toys, and other articles of great artistic value. These beautiful pieces of decorative art can be found in ancient architectural monuments.

The development and direction of contemporary art is positively influenced by these masterpieces of the past. Art experts and modern craftsmen, as they create their own works of art, study these treasures. Every older craftsman, respectfully called *ustod* in the East, passes on to the younger craftsmen the secrets of his trade. These secrets have been handed down from generation to generation for centuries. And thus the national art of the East is not perishing, but rather flourishing. This immortal art will forever bring joy to the people.

Work: A Source of Pride

Like the phoenix from the ashes, Tashkent rose from the ruins after having been destroyed by a terrible earthquake in the 1960s. Ashkhabad had also been destroyed by an earlier earthquake and today the city is more beautiful than ever. Every republic in the country gave assistance to rebuild these capitals in modern style.

The handsome, high-rise apartment houses amaze those unfamiliar with the secrets of earthquake-proof construction. And in Tashkent these modern buildings reach a height of twenty storeys.

The underground railway (the Metro) built in Tashkent is even more amazing. Scientists and engineers researched and developed an earthquake-proof Metro designed especially for Tashkent.

The present population in Tashkent is about two million. One's home is important to every person. It is possible to judge a person's lifestyle according to his home. To live well in a dingy, cold and poorly built house is impossible. But in a cosy, warm, attractive and well-equipped house one can live happily and comfortably.

Today 80 per cent of the country's population live in self-contained flats. The housing conditions for more than 200 million Soviet people have been improved. Most flats are made available free of charge, while the rents are the lowest in the world. They have not increased since 1928 and constitute only three per cent of a family's income.

This, naturally, applies to the Eastern republics as well, to those who worship and to those who do not.

While the personal earnings of the Soviet people are

increasing on a steady basis, the state provides considerable funds yearly for housing construction, public services, leisure and medical facilities and public transportation. As was stated earlier, education is free at all levels, as is medical care.

After the 1917 Revolution women in the Soviet East were declared equal to men. This status of equality allows them to work, study and lead full lives.

The primary objective of the 1917 Revolution was to give the power to the people. Representatives of the working people are elected to all bodies of Soviet government, from *aul, kishlak* or other rural Soviets to the Supreme Soviets of Autonomous and Union Republics, and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR: for example, 44 per cent of those elected to local bodies of government are workers, while 25 per cent are peasants, of those elected to the Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Republics 38 per cent are workers and 13 per cent are peasants. Among the deputies to the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics 33 per cent are workers and 17 per cent are peasants, while among the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 35 per cent are workers and 16 per cent are peasants. Elections at every level of government are held on the basis of equality for all. Every citizen has the right to elect and to be elected, regardless of nationality, occupation or social status. A citizen's personal position on religion does not restrict his right to participate in elections.

As a rule, those elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and to the Supreme Soviets of Union and Autonomous Republics are well known for their personal achievements in labour. Practising Muslims are among those elected to the highest bodies of authority in the country. Muslims participate in government on the local level as well: they are among the tens of thousands elected to the Soviets of People's Deputies of localities, districts and regions. Millions of citizens support them in their endeavour to fulfil their public duties.

Soviet Muslims for Peace and Friendship Among Nations

Article 28 of the Soviet Constitution states: "The USSR steadfastly pursues a Leninist policy of peace and stands for strengthening of the security of nations and broad international cooperation.

"The foreign policy of the USSR is aimed at ... preventing wars of aggression, achieving universal and complete disarmament, and consistently implementing the principle of the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems.

"In the USSR war propaganda is banned."

The Soviet government adopted the Decree on Peace, drafted for the purpose of ending World War I, on November 8, 1917, one day after the victory of the Socialist Revolution. Today the Peace Programme drafted by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is being consistently implemented.

The struggle for peace, against war, for disarmament and a broadening of international cooperation is an issue of extreme importance to all Soviet people, both those who profess a faith and those who do not.

And the hundreds of millions of Muslims around the globe want to live and raise their children in peace, without the fear of perishing in a thermonuclear holocaust.

The Soviet people, Muslims included, stand for preserving peace and for peaceful and mutually beneficial cooperation among nations. Peace and friendship is a prominent issue in the sermons of Muslim clergymen. Important

figures in the Soviet Islamic world take an active part in the Soviet people's work for peace. Leaders of Islamic organizations work on the Soviet Peace Committee, the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, etc.

Islamic conferences are periodically convened in the Soviet Union. In the past few years seven such conferences have been held in Tashkent and Dushanbe. Forty countries were represented by more than 200 delegates from Asia, Africa, Europe and America. The 1980 Islamic conference in Tashkent was conducted under the motto:

"May the 15th century of the Hegira be a century of peace and friendship among nations!"

Soviet Muslims take an active part in the international conferences of religious workers for peace and for the prevention of nuclear war. In May 1982, they participated in the World Conference of Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe that was held in Moscow.

The spiritual leaders of Soviet Muslims and the leading officials of local Islamic organizations urge Muslims to observe the canons of their religion, to promote the interests of their country and its people, and to work for the preservation of peace.

The Soviet Muslim clergy preach that creative work is by nature noble and that one must work for the good of the country. They stress that conscientious labour is pleasing to Allah and is rewarded in the next world.

Soviet Muslims are satisfied with the Soviet government's peace policy and wholeheartedly support it.

In sermons and in documents of Islamic organizations Muslims are encouraged to contribute toward the building of a better life in the USSR. The Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, in an address to followers of the Muslim faith, noted that Muslims in those republics and all over the country had taken an active part in the socialist transformation of their glorious homeland, being guided by the basic teachings of Islam expressed in the Hadith that

loyalty to one's country is fundamental to the belief in Allah. The Muslims of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and all the other republics have thus showed the entire world, including their fellow-worshippers of Islam, that in following the teachings of their religion, they have contributed to the national development of their country.

Delegations of Muslims from other countries frequently visit the Soviet Union and in return Soviet Muslims often visit other Eastern countries. These meetings allow members of the delegations to exchange information and to learn about the various differing aspects in their lives.

Prominent foreign Muslim statesmen, public figures and other foreign Muslim visitors to the USSR often comment on the life of Soviet Muslims. The International Islamic Symposium held in Dushanbe dedicated to the subject "The contribution of the Muslims of Central Asia, the Volga region and the Caucasus to the development of Islamic thought and to the cause of peace and social progress" was attended, along with the delegates of Soviet religious organizations, by prominent Islamic figures from 25 countries of Asia, Africa and Europe, and by representatives from the World Islamic League and the World Muslim Congress, the two biggest international organizations. Seid Abdoul Baraka Molla Shamsuddoulah, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Islam and the Modern World* (Bangladesh), made a speech in which he remarked that accusing the Soviet government of persecuting Muslims in the USSR had become a stock phrase of Western propaganda. And unfortunately there are some who believe these false accusations. Having himself visited this country and the flourishing Tajikistan in particular, he added that it is obvious that Soviet Muslims live well: they enjoy all the benefits of Soviet society and are not victims of unemployment. Although the USSR is not a Muslim country, the Soviet government has granted rights and opportunities to Muslims that have never been given in Muslim countries.

Abdel Wahhab Muhammad al-Zintani, former Libyan

ambassador to the Soviet Union, wrote that he was able to see personally the falsehood in Western fabrications about the life of Muslims in the USSR and the relations between religion and the state. The former ambassador is Muslim himself and thus he paid particular attention to this aspect of Soviet life. After visiting the mosque in Moscow for the first time, he found that it in no way differed from mosques in any Arab capital and he pondered: "How long will Arabs continue to believe the fables of Western propagandists about Soviet life?" He noted that before his first journey to the USSR he had heard a great deal about the alleged religious persecution and discrimination in the Soviet Union. He found, however, that Soviet Muslims are free to perform their religious rites and to follow Islamic traditions.

Ahmad ibn Muhammad Zabara, the Mufti of the Yemen Arab Republic, who has made several visits to the Soviet Union, published an article in the newspaper *Al Thawra*. He wrote that the Soviet state had ensured equality for its 270 million people who live in unity and work with loyalty and dedication. Chauvinism and sectarianism are unknown in the USSR. Preference is never granted to some to the detriment of others. Preference is only given to conscientious work, loyalty to one's country, honesty and knowledge.

Professor Abdoul al-Aziz El-Khayat, Dean of the Shariat Department of the University of Jordan, wrote that after his visit to the Soviet Union he had become convinced that Soviet Muslims are free to perform all the rites and ceremonies of religious life, including those of prayer and marriage. He was well aware of the spirit of Islam during his meetings with Muslims. He confirmed that Soviet authorities do not interfere in religious affairs. Muslims in the Soviet Union, like all other Soviet citizens, participate in all spheres of life: economic, cultural and educational. They work in the various sectors of management and production, and on collective and state farms as well. As

citizens of the Soviet Union Muslims receive free education.

The Soviet people, regardless of nationality or faith, and this includes Muslims, are not hostile to other nations. The Soviet people have more than once demonstrated their sincere desire to be friends with all peoples of the world. The Soviet people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, ardently desire peace. They want to live in the world, which is being transformed by the efforts of people and which every day becomes more and more beautiful, in peace and joy. They want their children to live in such a world, and they want all the people and children of the world to know this happiness, too.

A peaceful world is not simply a passive desire of the Soviet people. They are working tirelessly in the struggle for peace and are prepared to continue this work. With their conscientious work and dedication the Soviet people are building a better world.

And a better world means above all a world of freedom and peace.

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